

An Act Concerning Civil Unions-HB 5925

March 14, 2008

The enactment of the civil union law has had a profound impact on me and my family's life. It has afforded us the rights, privileges and protections of state laws that our married heterosexual counterparts have had all along. However, this is not enough as the civil union rights are still less than the marriage rights and have cost our family hundreds of dollars to attempt to secure the other protections civil unions cannot.

When our daughter was born in 2005, a form had to be created in order for my wife to be named as her other parent on the birth certificate. There was no precedent for it and explaining it to the well known hospital and their experienced hospital staff took some time. Once the form was developed in Hartford, I personally had to drive back to the hospital, still healing from giving birth, to validate my signature and to ensure that the form was submitted in a timely fashion.

One would think that the civil union and affording my legal spouse recognition on the birth certificate would be sufficient protection for the non-birth parent, but it is not. We travel for family outings to Sesame Place, Hershey Park, and Children's Museums out of state. If anything were to happen in PA, MA, NY, VA or any state that does not recognize the civil union, my child is vulnerable to her legal parent having no rights or recognition to make decisions or to come to her aid in a time of need. As result, added expenses to filing an application for step-parent adoption (\$150), monies for a home study (\$1,200), and fees for legal advice (\$500 and up) are incurred.

As a state employee, my wife was allowed access to my health care benefits before and after the enactment of civil unions. Yet, this too costs money that my heterosexual married counterparts do not have to pay. My salary was increased about \$6,000 and taxed accordingly. With the addition of a child, the family plan is able to be accessed and my wife is a dependent, still inflating my income by \$2,000.

My wife has Lupus. Although the civil union affords me the rights to make medical decisions and to enter hospital rooms in the State of CT, if we are traveling out of state, those rights are not portable nor are they recognized. As result, added expenses for fees of legal advice (\$500 and up) to create respective Health Proxy and Living Wills are incurred or we face the prospect of our two year old daughter being the next of kin.

In the event of either of our deaths, our jointly owned home and assets are subject to federal taxation. As result, added expenses for fees for legal advice (\$500 and up) to create respective Living Trusts are incurred or we are faced at the prospect of our two year old daughter own the home. Our married heterosexual counterparts merely have to get married and the laws will protect the rest.

In addition to the financial burdens, the social burden of having to explain what is a civil union and why it is not marriage are an emotional scar on my child and our family. As a woman of color, I have already endured the social separations related to race. As a civil union homosexual parent, must I, my wife and my child endure it again sanctioned by my very own government?

I support the raised bill of An Act Concerning Civil Unions-HB 5925

Christine Wagner-Morella